

WELLESLEY HIGH SCHOOL PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Mission Statement

We are a group of Wellesley residents, Wellesley High School graduates, and former and current Wellesley High School faculty who have joined together to form the Wellesley High School Preservation Committee. Our purpose is to ensure that the preservation and restoration of the entire interior and exterior of the 1938 Wellesley High School and the 1978 Wilbury Crockett Library be included in the development of plans for an educational institution that will continue to provide optimal conditions for learning in the 21st century. We have adopted these goals:

- To demonstrate to elected and appointed school and town officials the benefits and advantages of restoring and preserving the 1938 Wellesley High School and of making any needed architectural upgrades to the 1978 Wilbury Crockett Library.
- To raise the awareness of Wellesley residents of the important reasons for restoring and preserving the 1938 building with its 1978 Wilbury Crockett Library for current and future educational and community use.
- To keep steadily in view the historical significance of the 1938 Wellesley High School as an attractive and functional asset that is worthy of preservation.
- To illustrate in a balanced and informative way how and why the 1938 Wellesley High School embodies the spirit and character of who we are, where we have been, and where we are able to go as a high school and as a community.

The Wellesley High School Preservation Committee was organized in the Fall of 2006. These fifteen members have banded together to formulate and guide the town in the development of plans for an educational institution that will allow Wellesley High School to continue its mission in the 21st century. We continue to hold open weekly meetings. We have prepared weekly articles for The Wellesley Townsman (see Appendix) about the importance to preserve and restore the architectural quality and functionality of the 1938 building and the Wilbury Crockett Library.

We have conducted tours of the interior and exterior of the High School as well as a trip to Boston Latin School. Because of the magnitude of the project the WHSPC will continue to monitor the direction of the high school project and report and alert the town on developments of interest. These can also be viewed through frequent updates on our website: www.savewhs.org.

The Wellesley Townsman – September 7, 2006

Because the impending renovation of Wellesley High School is of great importance to Wellesley, and because such a massive project requires input from all corners of the town, we would like to announce the formation of the **Wellesley High School Preservation Committee**. Our goal is to address the need to preserve and restore the historic 1938 original building as part of the vision for a new High School. Our committee is made up of retired teachers, local residents, current faculty, and graduates – all with an interest in making sure the history of the school is recognized as part of the process.

We plan to meet regularly, to open our meetings, and to submit constructive information in the form of a series of articles/letters via The Townsman to the town, elected officials, and appointed committees. Our purpose is to help the process reach a practical and effective solution.

The High School project deserves wide community interest and support. Preserving the building's architectural distinction is part of this vision. The 1938 building is architecturally significant. It was placed in a prominent location and built in a style of lasting yet functional design. It was destined to become a symbol of educational excellence in our community and beyond. It has housed, nurtured, and educated thousands of young men and women to be productive citizens in our society. The credentials of Wellesley High School speak for themselves. It is recognized as one of the best high schools in the Commonwealth.

We invite the community to join us in this forum. To that end, we will be holding open meetings where interested parties can share ideas and advocate for a 21st century school while preserving our historically and culturally significant structure that has served so many for so long. Truly the best of both worlds!

Our next meeting will be September 12th at 5PM in the Town Hall with the Wellesley Historical Commission. Future meeting information will be announced in The Wellesley Townsman.

Our contact e-mail is wellhistcomm@hotmail.com or you can contact us by mail: Wellesley Historical Commission c/o Wellesley Town Hall, Wellesley 02482 ATTN: High School.

HISTORY IS IN OUR HANDS

The old saying, “History Is in Our Hands,” holds true. The Wellesley High School 1938 building is once again in the spotlight. Our focus is to preserve it. We believe it is part of who we are and what we are as a town and a community. Past attempts to tear down and replace the 1938 original High School were wisely averted, because citizens and educational leaders recognized the architectural importance and serviceable function of the building. Renovation won out over replacement. We believe that present and new programs can be accommodated by thoughtful renovation and by the creative use of current spaces. Preservation of the building’s interior and integrity needs to be addressed with careful reasoning and investigation.

There are many features of the original 1938 building that are worthy of preservation:

- Large handsome windows span the height of the building. The small panes add a colonial scale along with modern round trim. Each vertical window is separated from the next by a simple design. Replacement of the windows with thermally efficient panes would retain this architectural feature.
- High ceilings and grand spaces characterize the original architecture. Many ceilings were lowered in the 1992 renovation, thereby reducing the natural light in the building. Restoration of open, naturally lighted space would lend the high school a modern ambiance as it simultaneously fulfills the intent of its original design.
- The tower as the centerpiece of the school needs restoration. This special feature of the building, visible from many places in town, was executed in the style of the times, and today stands as a symbol of the high school and its educational mission.
- Many other intrinsic details, including sculptured stonework, interior woodwork, doors, and trim, plus slate window sills throughout the building, should be carefully evaluated with a view towards restoring them to their original impressiveness. All of these features are characteristic of a classic New England educational institution.

If we as a community value our 1938 building as a school that is historically significant and serviceable, then we need to support its preservation and restoration. The Massachusetts School Building Authority grants reimbursement to communities for renovating existing historic schools. As a matter of fact, the Massachusetts Historical Commission is included in the reimbursement process. Preservation can often be cost effective. We should look into this opportunity more carefully and make it part of our renovation plans. We should not wait until it’s too late.

The Wellesley Townsman – October 12, 2006

WELLESLEY HIGH SCHOOL: THE SITE

In 1936, after it was determined a new Wellesley Senior High was needed, an informal committee considered four locations, all in the vicinity of Hunnewell Field. The final selection was Kingsbury Park, so named because it was originally owned by the Kingsbury family.

Here is an excerpt from the Building Committee's report to the town:

"The physical characteristics of the site had an important bearing in the selection of a building plan because the long mound of relatively high ground on which the building is placed provided the proper northeast-southwest orientation for all of the principal rooms, and as it widens out at its northerly end, it provided sufficient area for the Auditorium without requiring a large expenditure of filling to properly landscape the building...."

The original plans of Robert Washburn Beal, landscape architect of the 1938 Wellesley High School building, have been lost but over the years there have been many successful efforts to enhance the grounds with memorial trees, boulders, arboretums and the courtyard that now ring the High School. Any consideration of future site-planning and development should take into account these remembrances by past classes.

Most dramatic and unfortunate has been the loss of green space. Walkways and exterior gathering places are important to the site. What was formerly the front lawn of the High School has become another traffic lane that connects Paine Street with Rice Street and smothers the original approach to the 1938 building. Accommodations for traffic, parking and pedestrians should be creatively planned and carefully incorporated into our renovation project. The beauty of the natural setting of Wellesley High School is critical to asserting and maintaining the identity of a school that reflects and honors more than three generations of educational excellence.

The Wellesley Townsman, October 19, 2006

WELLESLEY HIGH SCHOOL: THE STRUCTURE

The site of the 1938 Wellesley High School offered ample space in a wetland location with room for future expansion so Wellesley would never have to build another high school from scratch again. Pile driving ensured a stable foundation for a solid state-of-the-art concrete structure that retains its soundness and integrity to this day. A unified appearance and vertical emphasis were the hallmarks of its impressive exterior. Its description by the 1938 Building Committee read:

“Outside, the simple modern design is carried out in a pleasing shade of red brick trimmed with Indiana limestone. The only ornament appears below the window openings in a simple design showing primitive symbols for the sun, lightening, and clouds that suggest the forces of nature which the building must withstand.”

A flexible and functional layout has permitted, as we all know, several additions to the 1938 building. Its west end, where the original gym is located, remains intact. The east end of the building, where the present library and music rooms are located, has undergone substantial change. We would do well to consider a renovation of the Wilbury Crockett Library with its Frank Lloyd Wright setting at the edge of the wooded area. Imaginative design could expand and refine the modern features of this space and bring it into architectural balance with the 1938 building. An appropriate solution to the unsatisfactory adjacent 1978 stairwell would be one that eases movement from one floor to another and at the same time provides ready access. As we plan for the future, it is prudent to restore and preserve the original 1938 building and to renovate towards a harmonious result - a state-of-the-art high school.

STOCKHOLM IN WELLESLEY

The Wellesley High School tower stands as a brilliant decision on the part of the architects of the 1938 building. Not only is it visible as a landmark of a distinguished educational institution, but also it services an architectural purpose of unifying and anchoring the auditorium and classrooms.

Robert Dean of Wellesley, architect of the High School and member of the firm of Perry Shaw Hepburn of Boston said in a 1981 letter to Mary Rich of the Wellesley Historical Commission that a tower is "...a symbol of a public building." The architects had for their inspiration the tower of Stockholm's town hall, designed by Ragnar Ostberg and constructed between 1909 and 1923. Imagine Stockholm in Wellesley!

The eight level structure of the Wellesley High School tower was further described in the 1938 dedication program: "Even the tower has a suggestion of functional design in that it provides a mounting for the 7½ foot clock face (designed by the architect with gold-leaf) and includes an additional large room which may be used for student activities. The upper portion is covered with lead coated copper which will retain a soft gray color, and on the top is mounted a 3' 4" gold leaf covered ball and weather vane. At the very peak is perched a spread eagle to symbolize the soaring of youth's ambition ..."

Today the tower is in need of restoration. The roof and the clock need repair. The balustrade is falling apart, and the entire structure is in a deteriorating condition. All the gold leaf has worn off. The tower's spacious room, formerly used for reading classes, could be renovated for new usage. The tower, a symbol of Wellesley High School, can be carefully and imaginatively restored as a beacon for future generations.

The Wellesley Townsman – November 2, 2006

WELLESLEY HIGH SCHOOL – AUDITORIUM, LOBBY & GYM

In the description of the new Wellesley High School, the Building Committee in 1938 set forth the rationale for optimal positioning of the auditorium and gymnasium:

The auditorium wing was placed at right angles to the main classroom block to avoid undue lengthening of the structure and to make it readily accessible to the public as well as to the students. Both the auditorium and gymnasium are arranged so they can have public performances without tying up the rest of the building....

Student and community access to the auditorium and gym is likewise important in the current planning for the Wellesley High School project. The 1938 auditorium continues to meet the expectations of its builders to this day, accommodating all manner of activity from school performances and assemblies to Town Meeting and community gatherings. The interior of the auditorium with its majestic two-story sweep has 645 seats, which were beautifully refinished and reupholstered in the 1992 renovation. Large gold-leafed graphic letters, spelling out the names of Franklin, MacDowell, Washington, Longfellow, Saint-Gaudens, Mark Twain, Audubon, Lincoln, Edison, and Mann lend a sense of history and create a pleasing visual break in the lofty room. The proposal in 1938 for adding a projection booth in the balcony to show movies never materialized. Might it be implemented today to replace the former Community Playhouse? Our auditorium represents the grand architectural vision and design that grace the whole interior of the 1938 Wellesley High School building. Improved handicap access, air conditioning, enlargement of the backstage area, an updated sound system, and a little sprucing up would be suitable steps toward preserving the original architects' intention of providing an elegant state-of-the-art facility.

The lobby, with its polished flagstone floor and iron-spot brick walls, forms the main entrance to the high school. Restoring it to its former glory would do much toward extending a fitting welcome to students, townspeople, and visitors. The original ticket booth, coatroom, and stone drinking fountain would benefit from imaginative restoration. Refurbishing the doors to the lobby and raising the ceiling to include the original fixtures would add a wonderful touch and create a lasting positive impression.

While the 1962 Larsson Gymnasium has absorbed many of the activities requiring area and seating greater than were needed some seventy years ago, the original "upstairs gym" still plays host to school and community activities involving health and fitness, wrestling, cheerleading, athletic practices, and recreation basketball. It is booked solid for much of the year, its folding wooden partition able to add flexibility to the space as originally planned.

The Wellesley Townsman – November 9, 2006

THE NATIONAL REGISTER

The inclusion of a building on the National Register of Historic Places fosters a sense of pride in a community's past and present, for it shows an appreciation of civic history and continuity as embodied in its institutions. We are fortunate in Wellesley to have several buildings on the National Register: the Town Hall (1883-1886); Wellesley's first high school (1894), now Phillips Park; and the Wellesley Farms Railroad Station (1890). Applications for enrollment in the Register are currently in process for the Sprague Tower (1928) and the Hills Branch Library (1927).

The procedure for placing a landmark in Wellesley on the Register is initiated and overseen by our Wellesley Historical Commission. Wellesley High School, originally named the Gamaliel Bradford Senior High School (1938), is deserving of this recognition. Its architecturally significant design, revolutionary for its day, combines colonial features with modern elements. Its role in nurturing three generations of young people and its endurance as a symbol of the high quality of education that our community values make it a prime candidate for receiving this special honor.

The listing of our 1938 High School on the Register of Historic Places would ensure, first, national recognition for a structure we deem important to Wellesley; second, eligibility for federal funds for restoring areas of the building; and third, preservation of an historic property for posterity. Rather than create restrictions, enrollment of a building on the National Register allows changes to be made while at the same time affording protection for a historic asset.

The Wellesley Townsman – November 16, 2006

Wellesley High School's Interior

“Really useful and fine”

Shortly before the dedication of the new Wellesley High School on October 21, 1938, *The Wellesley Townsman* sent a roving reporter to file a story on the completed project. Here is an excerpt from the writer's observations:

“... You might be interested in the unsolicited comment of one of the carpenters who has been employed on the new building from the very first: *‘Wellesley sure is smart....When the job is done, they've got something really useful and fine instead of a fancy looking building. Now take my town _____, they spent lots of money on their school buildings, more sometimes than Wellesley has on this one, but there isn't a one that will compare with this one for being planned and equipped and handy for those who have to use it....’*”

Wellesley High School's interior was designed with the present and future in mind. Combining overall functionality and low maintenance with esthetic appeal, it was built to last. The plans of Robert Dean of Wellesley, the architect of the High School and a member of the firm of Perry Shaw Hepburn of Boston, called for the best available finishes, lighting, and furnishings. Attractive doors, wood trim, and slate window sills were used in classrooms and offices. The warm and welcoming educational atmosphere that was born from the architect's vision is palpable in the school to this day.

While the overall interior structure and elegant architectural features of the 1938 High School cannot be duplicated by modern construction, these elements can and should be preserved and refurbished. As a model for this process, we need look no further than our Town Hall, whose exterior, interior, and slate roof with decorative filigree have all undergone restoration over time. The result is a functional building for modern town administration that preserves the classic 1880's design of the architects Shaw & Hunnewell. Who else can boast a lofty Great Hall for meetings, skillfully crafted fireplaces, and a vast expanse of windows? Today our town Hall represents a long history of well-managed town government: we use it to great advantage and point it out to visitors with great pride.

Now is the time to focus our attention on the urgent needs of the high school. The 1938 building requires appropriations in the renovation project for restoring both its interior and exterior features to the educational functionality and architectural integrity that were originally envisioned. Just as our restored Town Hall stands as a source and symbol of our proud civic heritage, so the restoration of Wellesley High School, with careful planning and execution, will produce a state of the art facility that will remain a source and symbol of Wellesley's proud heritage of educational excellence.

Preservation Questions & Answers – I

Q. What is the historical significance of the 1938 Wellesley High School and why should its preservation be a goal in the current building project?

- A.** As we have stated in previous articles, the 1938 Wellesley High School has unique architectural credentials. It was designed by the internationally acclaimed firm, Perry, Shaw and Hepburn of Boston. Its execution was recognized nationally as an extraordinary breakthrough in high school architecture. The decorative brick, glazed tiles, and high quality woodwork lend a classic style and a functionality that serve the school and community to this day. The Wellesley “W,” which is repeated in patterns on the upper tower and in the limestone balustrades of the auditorium and upper gymnasium, stands as the signature of the building. The tower itself identifies our high school.

Because this school is so much a part of Wellesley’s overall educational heritage, its architecture not only invokes the past, but also it instills a sense of continuity between generations and thereby strengthens our community. Historical considerations, rather than be isolated, should be welcomed as part of the current planning process. Existing rooms and spaces throughout the building rather than undergo radical alteration, can and should be incorporated into the vision of our educational future. Preservation, restoration, and respect for the environment all play a role in planning a state-of-the art high school for the twenty-first century.

Q. Won’t putting Wellesley High School on the National Register of Historic Places limit our capacity to make improvements?

- A.** Not at all. The National Register is the official list of American cultural resources worthy of preservation. Because of its significance to our community, the 1938 High School is highly deserving of this honor. We have stated before the benefits of including the High School on the Register. Most important, this process reflects our pride in creating and preserving an invaluable educational asset. In no way does inclusion in the National Register prevent updates and improvements, but rather it challenges the architect to produce a result that will preserve the intent of the original design.

The Wellesley Townsman – November 30, 2006

TOUR & WEBSITE

On this coming Saturday, December 2nd, at 9AM, the Wellesley High School Preservation Committee will be conducting a tour of the interior of the 1938 High School. The lobby, auditorium, tower, upstairs gymnasium, and classrooms with original architectural features will be visited and explained as integral parts of the architect's vision for a high school that has become a source and symbol of educational excellence for generations of Wellesley students. We intend this tour to complement the one that was conducted last month on the exterior of the 1938 building and the grounds. More than twenty interested neighbors and residents were able to attend. All Wellesley people are invited Saturday to learn about the design and functionality of one of Wellesley's finest institutions. Please gather at the High School lobby. Refreshments will follow the tour.

The Wellesley High School Preservation Committee also announces the launch of its website: www.savewhs.org. Besides the texts of our recent articles published in The Wellesley Townsman, the site includes a brief history of Wellesley High School; charts and site plans; and photographs of past and present architecture and landscape. Of special interest are links to descriptions of fifteen other high schools from across the country that have been preserved and restored with striking success. Our goal is to strengthen community support in the current building project for preserving and restoring the interior and exterior of the 1938 High School and also to illustrate how and why the 1938 building embodies the spirit of who we are, where we have been, and where we are able to go as a high school and as a community.

TOURS REVISITED

On a sunny Saturday morning in October, the Wellesley High School Preservation Committee conducted a tour of the grounds and exterior of the historic 1938 Wellesley High School building. More than twenty residents and neighbors were able to attend. Beginning with a brief history of Wellesley High School, we noted the condition of the exterior, the additions to the building, and other significant features of the site. These included memorials and landscape beautification. Special attention was given to the courtyard. Since its completion in 1997, this outdoor area, paved with commemorative bricks and graced with benches and trees, has been a place of repose for the high school community.

Last Saturday, the Preservation Committee conducted an interior tour of the 1938 building. Again, more than twenty residents and neighbors, wishing to learn more about the 1938 High School, were able to take part. We visited the lobby, auditorium, classrooms, tower, and the upstairs gymnasium. Many original architectural elements were pointed out. Among them were the large windows capturing natural light; fine woodwork; and grand spaces, including the auditorium with its elegant two-story sweep and the upstairs gymnasium, whose folding partition enables it to be divided into two spaces for recreational activities. We saw what is right with Wellesley High School.

During both tours, conversation about restoration and preservation of the 1938 building centered on **what** needs to be done as well as on **how** and **when** it will be accomplished. In a project of this magnitude, involvement and participation of people from all corners of the town are vital to the success of the process. Creativity and imagination are needed by elected officials, appointed committees, and community members in order to achieve a result in which we all can take real pride. Certainly Wellesley is up to the challenge.

Preservation Questions & Answers II

For the past two months, the Wellesley High School Preservation Committee has presented reasons for preserving and restoring our historic 1938 Wellesley High School building. Our goal has been to demonstrate to the community the value of keeping the 1938 building intact. Its complete preservation and restoration are important parts of the vision for achieving a state of the art high school that will embody all that is best in Wellesley education. We ask to be included in the planning for this important project. We shall continue to provide information and respond to frequently asked questions.

Q. What shall we do about future overcrowding in the 1938 building?

- A.** The structurally sound 1938 building has enabled a variety of classroom spaces to be utilized to good advantage. Continued use of functional space in the 1938 building should be carefully planned and creatively implemented to accommodate expected enrollment increases.

Q. It is important to save the exterior of the 1938 building. Should the interior also be preserved and restored?

- A.** Yes. Restoration of the interior should be implemented in light of the original design. The details envisioned by the 1938 architects not only continue to be serviceable, but also contribute to a practical and esthetic environment. The quality of materials used in rooms and corridors cannot be duplicated in today's market. Restoration of basic features, such as doors to classrooms and stairwells; wooden casings and trim; and interior brickwork and tile, should be undertaken. All of these elements, and more, are essential to the warm and welcoming atmosphere that characterizes Wellesley High School today.

Q. How can the restoration of the 1938 building be accomplished with minimal disruption to the daily operation of the high school?

- A.** The summer months offer an opportunity for phased implementation of the process. This requires coordination of schedules so that work of the highest quality can be done in an efficient and timely manner.

The Wellesley Townsman – December 21, 2006

Preservation and Restoration I - What needs to be done?

The Wellesley High School Preservation Committee endorses the preservation of the present school library, auditorium, lobby, administrative offices, and upstairs gymnasium. These spaces have the potential to meet the needs of the High School and community for the foreseeable future. Elimination of each of these facilities from its present location, as recommended in concept “C” that the School Committee selected in November (see The Wellesley Townsman, December 7, 2006), gives rise to a domino effect that would radically alter the interior and exterior of the building as well as access to the school and campus.

1. The Wilbury Crockett Library at the High School was built in 1978. Sited to allow community access, this facility continues to be a functional part of the school. With some creativity, it can be made to complement the style of the 1938 building. Its Frank Lloyd Wright setting at the edge of the wooded area provides a unique library environment. The structure lends itself to such architectural enhancements as the creation of conference rooms and the addition of large windows looking out on the natural landscape. Preservation of the Crockett Library would retain this infinitely desirable atmosphere, and it would serve to prevent the dismantling of the auditorium to accommodate the library that concept “C” envisions.
2. The auditorium and lobby also require architectural imagination and commitment in order to achieve needed improvements. Expansion of the backstage area, addition of functionally related spaces, updated lighting and sound systems, and improved handicap access would create a first rate performing arts venue as well as a suitable facility for school and community gatherings. Refurbishing the lobby would enable Wellesley High School to extend the elegant welcome that generations of people have come to expect and enjoy. Preservation of these spaces would also save the first floor administrative offices and thereby make unnecessary their relocation in the space currently occupied by the locker rooms situated below the 1938 gymnasium, a restructuring that concept “C” endorses.
3. The 1938 upstairs gymnasium, scheduled in concept “C” for conversion into space for other uses, today serves the school and community as a recreational facility. This gymnasium has solid wood paneling and a folding partition that enables it to be divided into two useable spaces. For much of the year it supports a full schedule of activities, including health and fitness, cheerleading, athletic practices, wrestling, and recreational basketball. Updates to this facility would benefit everyone using it for years to come.

Preservation of these major components of the high school is essential to keeping the identity of Wellesley High School intact, and it prevents the negative impact of dismantling one functional part of the building only to recreate it in another part. We recognize departmental program needs for improved and expanded facilities at the high school. We urge the adoption of our proposal to preserve the library, auditorium, lobby, administrative offices, and upstairs gymnasium as one that would enable departments to

meet their needs through the use of the 1938 building and appropriately designed additional spaces. Its implementation would result in minimal disruption to the daily operation of the high school. Our proposal recognizes the value of what the town of Wellesley has built, and it incorporates our educational heritage into a vision of a 21st century state-of-the-art Wellesley High School.

The Wellesley Townsman – December 28, 2006

Restoration and Preservation II - What needs to be done?

We appreciate the many responses that people have given to our Wellesley Townsman articles on the need for preserving and restoring the entire interior and exterior of the 1938 Wellesley High School. They represent an important voice in helping to guide the planning process for the high school project. Two of these responses have supplied documentation that reinforces our position on preserving the high school's Wilbury Crockett Library and auditorium (see *The Wellesley Townsman*, December 21, 2006). The first comes from the *Review Report, Wellesley Public Schools, Library Department K--12*, dated April, 2006. It states, "The high school library has adequate overall area, some peripheral rooms, and could be a welcoming and inviting space for students." This report details the results of a study of school libraries in Wellesley that was authorized by the Wellesley School Department and was conducted by a review board consisting of a director of information technology, a director of libraries, and library teachers from the local area. A second instance of community response to our articles cites the *Wellesley High School Planning Alternatives Study*, submitted on September 20, 2005, by Symmes Maini & McKee Associates (SMMA), the architects currently under contract for the high school project. It reads, "AUDITORIUM • Beautiful space needs sound system upgrade, storage space, and accessibility upgrades."

The availability of such information points up the continuing need for town-wide input as a basis for discussion of issues and for gathering facts essential to making responsible decisions. We believe the importance of this process warrants the establishment of a town-wide Wellesley High School Building Committee. We recognize that the Massachusetts State Building Authority (MSBA) requires, for state reimbursement, a school building committee that includes representatives from town government, the school department, and others who oversee, specifically, the application and construction processes (963 CMR 2.10: MSBA, September 22, 2006). In addition to fulfilling this requirement, we are advocating the formation in Wellesley of a broader committee, to be appointed by the Board of Selectmen. This committee would guide all aspects of the high school project, including its planning, execution, and completion. Transparency of the actions taken by this committee would ensure its credibility and integrity. This town-wide committee would include representatives from town government, the school department, the Parent-Teachers-Student Organization (PTSO), high school neighborhoods, Wellesley's institutions of higher education, and preservation interests. Also included would be an architect who is sensitive to Wellesley's desire to preserve and restore the historically significant 1938 Wellesley High School building as the primary architectural focus of a state-of-the-art facility. This committee would enable the town to retain control of the project and to see it through to a successful conclusion. Establishing a Wellesley High School Building Committee presents a rare opportunity for achieving both openness and inclusion in a process that would encourage town-wide participation and result in a 21st century Wellesley High School with its identity intact.

The Wellesley Townsman – January 4, 2007

Restoration and Preservation III - What needs to be done?

The Wellesley High School Preservation Committee urges the formulation of a Wellesley High School Comprehensive Master Plan designed to guide policy and decision-making that pertain to the structure, site, and institutional integrity of the high school in both the near term and for decades to come.

The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), which oversees the reimbursement of state aid for local school projects, is now developing guidelines for an application process that will require a master plan encompassing both short- and long-term perspectives (963 CMR 2.10: (5), MSBA, Sept. 22, 2006). In fact, the Wellesley High School Facilities Advisory Committee in its report of April 2005 recommended the adoption of a comprehensive master plan for the high school and referred to it again in its report of January 2006. We believe it is to Wellesley's advantage to create and adopt a comprehensive master plan at this time for the high school, first, because it fulfills the FAC recommendation; second, because it would stand as a practical measure for responsibly addressing the high school's present and future needs; and third, because it would anticipate MSBA guidelines and would serve as a model for Massachusetts schools. Wellesley would do well to take the lead in this area. By its very nature, this plan would require us as a town to sustain a steady and well-considered view of where Wellesley is at any given time, and where Wellesley expects to be in the years ahead with respect to the high school, its campus, and its educational mission. A comprehensive master plan would enable us to consolidate and maintain a clear focus on issues concerning the facility, the site, the landscape, and the relationship between Wellesley High School as an educational institution and its need to accommodate changes in school population and programming over the next fifty years.

We have continued to express our desire for openness and inclusion in the discussion and planning for the restoration and preservation of the entire interior and exterior of the 1938 Wellesley High School and its 1978 Wilbury Crockett Library. To that end, we have recently urged the Board of Selectmen through The Wellesley Townsman (December 28, 2006) to establish a town-wide Wellesley High School Building Committee, consisting of representatives from town government, the School Department, the Parent-Teachers-Student Organization, high school neighborhoods, Wellesley's institutions of higher education, and preservation interests.

Also included should be an architect who is experienced in the restoration and preservation of historically significant buildings. We envision the Wellesley High School Building Committee as one that will guide all aspects of this important high school project and see it through to its successful completion.

We believe the Wellesley High School Building Committee, once established, should also formulate and implement the Wellesley High School Comprehensive Master Plan described above. Wellesley High School has achieved distinction through generations of purposeful development and action as a leader in education. The 1938 architecturally significant building embodies the school's unique spirit of enduring excellence and

should be the primary focus of a comprehensive master plan that is worthy of the town. Through town-wide participation this comprehensive planning process would ensure Wellesley High School's preeminent position as an educational institution in the 21st century.

Restoration and Preservation IV - What needs to be done?

The Wellesley High School Preservation Committee through recent articles in the Wellesley Townsman has advocated the creation of a broadly based Wellesley High School Building Committee and the formulation of a Wellesley High School Comprehensive Master Plan (December 28, 2006 and January 4, 2007). We have urged the Board of Selectmen to appoint this building committee, which would include representatives from the School Department, town government, the Wellesley High School Preservation Committee, and an architect who is sensitive to Wellesley's desire to restore and preserve the entire interior and exterior of the original 1938 Wellesley High School and the 1978 Wilbury Crockett Library. This committee would guide all aspects of the high school building project, including planning, execution, and completion. It would satisfy the requirements set forth by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (963 CMR 2.10: MSBA, September 22, 2006) for reimbursement of state aid for a project such as ours. At the same time, this committee would broaden the MSBA scope, so that Wellesley can achieve transparency and inclusion as well as utilize community expertise in a project of major importance to the town. We envision that this committee, once established, would also formulate and implement a Wellesley High School Comprehensive Master Plan, designed to address short- and long-term needs of the high school. This master plan should be considered in the context of town-wide school planning.

This master plan for the high school would enable the town to achieve a broad perspective as it sets priorities and establishes goals for the building, site, and landscape. Preservation and restoration of the 1938 building as the center of the high school should be the main architectural focus of the plan. It should also keep in constant view the relationship between the facilities of the high school and its mission as an educational institution. Expanding from this center, the plan should attend to restoring landscape and green space, providing attractive walkways, improving exterior lighting, enhancing outdoor gathering areas, and beautifying the high school campus. Further, the plan should address the quality of pedestrian and automobile access, including sidewalks and parking.

We are fortunate in Wellesley that our institutions of higher learning have adopted and implemented master plans for the development and management of their respective schools. The success of each plan is the result of including in the process representatives from the entire college community. The expertise that our colleges could bring to the Wellesley High School Building Committee and the Wellesley High School Comprehensive Master Plan would be of great benefit to the high school as it continues to meet the highest expectations of the town, both now and in the future.

The Wellesley Townsman – January 25, 2007

Boston Latin – How they did it

How important are the cultural history, institutional memory, and identity of a school to alumni, students, teachers, and community members? The Wellesley High School Preservation Committee found out recently when it visited Boston Latin School and saw the restoration and improvements made to this historically significant early 20th century (1922) school. Established in 1635 as the nation's first public school, Boston Latin School is one of the city's premier educational institutions.

An assistant headmaster and a Boston Latin student led us on our tour of the school. We also had the opportunity to speak with the headmaster. Alumni, faculty, architects, and others had joined with administrators to form a consensus group that guided the award-winning restoration project to completion in 2000. We saw that the Boston Latin School integrates the old with the new in a creative and architecturally imaginative way. It has become a school for the 21st century, promoting its tradition of educational excellence.

As we walked the corridors, we were able to make comparisons between Boston Latin School and the 1938 Wellesley High School. The quality of materials and workmanship was evident throughout all parts of the building, including classrooms, corridors, office space, and the larger areas, as is the case in the 1938 Wellesley High School building. And like our school, the Boston Latin School has withstood the test of time. At the heart of the original Boston Latin School is the auditorium, which has served generations of students and, with recent upgrades and improvements, remains the hallmark of the school. Its oak paneled walls, classic lighting, and original seating and stage are impressive as they link the past to the present in a functional and elegant manner. A new addition has provided a black box performing arts theater, adjacent to a large choral and instrumental practice facility that accommodates program needs. Our student guide, who has been involved in dramatic productions, said that the new facilities are working well for students and faculty alike as a complement to the original auditorium. From the initial planning phase of this performing arts venue, a principal goal was the preservation of the original auditorium as part of a vision for a 21st century school. This auditorium is the pride of the Boston Latin School, as our auditorium is the pride of Wellesley High School.

We learned that foresight and open dialogue in the decision-making process for Boston Latin School's restoration enabled all interested parties to achieve a successful integration of needs, values, and perspectives. At the same time, we were struck by the contrasting approach the Wellesley School Committee adopted when they selected Concept "C" in November 2006. (See The Wellesley Townsman, December 7, 2006.) This concept calls for dismantling the 1938 Wellesley High School auditorium and lobby in order to accommodate a library that would be used to replace the attractive and functional 1978 Wilbury Crockett Library, which is slated for demolition in that option. This ill-conceived approach is being pursued, despite the following statement by Simms Maini McKee Associates (SMMA), the architects currently under contract for the high school project: "AUDITORIUM • Beautiful space needs sound system upgrade, storage

space, and accessibility upgrades” (*Wellesley High School Planning Alternatives Study*, submitted on September 20, 2005).

At Boston Latin School, we were also impressed by a recently built gymnasium adjacent to the original 1922 gymnasium, which itself continues to be used extensively. The main office and guidance suites remain in the same places they have always occupied. Improvements have been made to lighting, windows, and doors throughout the building. Heating and plumbing have been brought up to standard, and accommodations have been provided to make all parts of the building accessible to people with disabilities. Again, we saw a marked contrast with the approach selected by the Wellesley School Committee. Under Concept “C,” the administrative offices on the first floor of the 1938 high school would be dismantled and relocated in a space now occupied by the locker rooms situated below the 1938 gymnasium. This gymnasium is constantly used for school and town-wide athletic and recreational activities, but is itself earmarked in Concept “C” for conversion to other uses.

The success of the Boston Latin School project of 2000 was realized by consensus. Members of their school building committee envisioned that their requirements for a 21st century school could be achieved through preserving their original building. Boston Latin School continues to go forward, assured that its mission as an educational institution is being fulfilled under optimal conditions.

The success of the Wellesley High School project also requires consensus. The Wellesley High School Preservation Committee advocates the formation of an expanded Wellesley High School Building Committee. This committee would be fully representative of the town and provide the needed transparency and openness in the decision-making process for a public project of this magnitude. Only through achieving a true consensus on a town-wide basis can we ensure that the mission of Wellesley High School as an educational institution will be accomplished, and through the preservation and restoration of the original 1938 high school, that our 21st century Wellesley High School will provide optimal conditions for learning with its identity intact.

The Wellesley Townsman – March 15, 2007

Preservation Questions & Answers – III

The Wellesley High School Preservation Committee continues to raise the awareness of Wellesley residents of the important reasons for preserving and restoring our historic 1938 Wellesley High School building with its 1978 Wilbury Crockett Library. We shall continue to provide information and respond to frequently asked questions as a part of the planning for this important project. Here is another set of Q & A's:

Q. In the 2007 Advisory Report, the Advisory Committee writes under Article 25 (p. 82), “The role of the new SBC (School Building Committee) and other various Town boards will require a new level of communication and coordination. In addition, the elected and appointed members of these boards must remember to keep the Town’s citizens apprised at each step of the project, particularly in light of the need for a Town wide vote to approve funding a High School project.” Has this been done?

A. No. Although the Wellesley High School Building Committee (SBC) has begun its meetings, information has not been forthcoming. Dissemination of meeting times and dates needs to be announced well in advance in a variety of media. The current meeting time of 8 AM makes it difficult for most interested parties to attend. Evenings or Saturday mornings would work better. Finally, in keeping with an open and transparent policy, the minutes of all deliberations, agendas, and other related documentation should be published in a timely manner and made available to everyone. A special SBC website should be linked to the town website, and hard copies of the proceedings should be made available at the library.

Q. What can the town expect regarding the School Committee’s proposal for the Wellesley High School project under Article 25 at the upcoming Town Meeting?

A. It is not clear according to the School Committee report presented in the 2007 Advisory Report (p. 128). The School Committee is asking the town to pursue the need for a feasibility study without setting forth the content or rationale of any concrete proposal. Since nothing new has been submitted, the town can only assume that Concept C, adopted by the School Committee in November 2006, remains its proposal. This Concept calls for the demolition of the Wilbury Crockett Library, the dismantling of the present auditorium to accommodate a smaller library, the relocation of the administrative offices, and the loss of the upstairs gym. Clearly this approach does not preserve our 1938 building and existing library. It is a waste of an invaluable educational and community asset.

Q. The High School Program Review Advisory Committee (PRC) Report appears in the 2007 Advisory Report (p. 131). In its analysis of Wellesley High School’s future programs does it give due consideration to the educational benefits and advantages of preserving and restoring the entire 1938 building with its Wilbury Crockett Library?

- A. No. The PRC report suggests, on the one hand, that the School Building Committee should give consideration to "...the historical value of various aspects of the buildings..." (p.133). On the other hand, it states on the same page, "...the option of constructing a new high school on the current site should be re-examined..." These recommendations are contradictory and incomplete. They threaten the restoration and preservation of Wellesley High School in the upcoming project.

For more information please visit our website: www.savewhs.org

Copies of *The Wellesley High School Preservation Handbook*, *The guide to restoration and preservation of the original 1938 building*, will be available soon.